



USING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION TO ENHANCE ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts a small-scale understanding of Nonverbal Communication (NVC). It is based on the theoretical study of the NVC-eye contact and proxemics used effectively in the classroom might aid to enhance English communication skills among young learners. During the teaching-learning process, the possible ways of using some factors of NVC are discussed that might help to improve both teacher's and learner's communication skills.

KEYWORDS: NVC, eye contact, proxemics, English, communication, teachers, students.

English is our major window on the world.

-Jawahar Lal Nehru

Teaching and learning the English language has gained momentum very fast since the East India Company in India. English is a global language and one of the most important areas where one can contribute well. Providing good education to our young learners can bring a change in society. Learning and communicating in English has become important in everyone's life. Knowing the English language open up all doors and increases opportunity globally for each one to take up courses or jobs related in any field of their eligibility or choices. Teaching and learning the English language through Non-Verbal Communication (NVC) will make a big difference among our learners and teachers also. Learning NVC will not only enhances English communication skills but also maintains a better life and develops personality skill as well. Besides, the learner will improve basic social behaviour like manner, etiquettes and discipline for themselves.

Non-Verbal Communication (NVC) is a wordless message consciously or unconsciously send across to convey meaning with or without verbal communication. Brant Bureson of Purdue University defined NVC as "any kind of expression, gesture or symbolic behaviour that is either intended to convey meaning or happens to convey meaning" (Burgoon et al. 2016, p. 11). Nonverbal communication includes kinesics (body movement, gesture and facial expressions), tactile (touching behaviour), paralanguage (pitch, stress, intonation and voice quality), proxemics (distance or space), artefacts (clothing and cosmetic aids) and environmental factors (Knott 1979, p. 226). NVC plays the most pivotal role in teaching and learning English communication skills in the classroom. It is estimated that during face to face communication 93% of all meaning is communicated through nonverbal cues and only 7% of meaning comes from verbal content which are only words (Burgoon et al. 2016, p. 2). It explains that during face to face interaction it is important to know the importance of what is said and how it is said makes a lot of difference in the meaning.

Young learners are completely new to learn English as it is their second language. For maximum learner's school is the only environment where English is taught and encouraged to learn. In school, we have all types of students-fast learners, average learners and slow learners, and have to deal with all equally. Accordingly, the teacher has to plan their teaching style, methodology and approaches, and need to understand different learning styles that student can adopt to learn things at their strength. The learner becomes easily uninterested, lethargic or bored if the class is not lively or engaging therefore, teaching and learning should be amusing and motivating so that learners feel encouraged and enthusiastic towards learning. In school, learners begin as nonreaders they learn slowly and gradually, develop skills, learn the language and gain knowledge to become a good reader. Most of the learners rely more on nonverbal cues of the teacher than on verbal words as these learners are neither fluent in mother tongue (L1) nor target language English (L2) and even vocabulary is low. Therefore, teachers must make more often use of nonverbal communication in the classroom which will reinforce learning English communication skills among learners.

During teaching and learning teacher must be aware of the cultural background of each student because culturally nonverbal cues can be the same but have different meanings so the message convey can be misunderstood. In the everyday classroom, the teacher gives countless nonverbal cues to students. Some teachers are aware of nonverbal cues, and many of them still find difficulty in making them evident while teaching; as a result, they have to rely on words to send a message across. But students believe, understand and pay more attention to the visual actions of a teacher than the oral one. Therefore, body movement, a gesture like

O.K, raising thumb (well done), facial expressions like a smile as it brings happiness and confidence, maintaining proxemics distance and making eye contact with every student to build rapport is very important to bring into the class and teachers need to be aware, and smart to use it appropriately in the class without being mistaken for meanings of the cues used in the classroom during teaching-learning processes. These NV cues when used appropriately it helps in learning, developing fluency, accuracy, vocabulary and discovering new things. The teacher can develop his/her cues and teach them accordingly.

During the process of face-to-face communication eye contact plays a pivotal role in sending and receiving messages. Eyes are considered one of the most powerful tools for communicating. Eye contact is very active during the listening process as it maintains looking into the teacher's eyes which even builds rapport and connection between the teacher and students. It also conveys that learners are listening attentively and actively. The teacher keeps an eagle eye on every student. "When eye messages are combined with other nonverbal gestures such as an index finger raised to the lips signalling "quiet," an open hand moving up and down singling "settle down," or a raised eyebrow signalling "disapproval," they can be very effective in maintaining classroom discipline" (Tauber 2007, p. 300).

If we look in Indian culture, avoiding eye contact with teachers in the classroom is a sign of showing respect but sometimes students hide by not making eye contact or lowering their eyelid when they are caught in the teacher's eye for misbehaving, talking, or not listening to the teacher, or when students have not done their work, not brought things to the classroom which was asked by the teacher, or sometimes when learners do not know the answer they do not look towards the teacher. But, if we compare to some parts of western culture maintaining eye contact shows sign of positiveness and sincerity. If someone fails to meet other person eye contact during speaking to each other it implies the person is disinterested in the talk, it also shows a lack of confidence and insincerity. In Indian culture, the teacher should maintain eye contact with every student in the classroom. If the teacher shows bias towards high-level learners and low-level learners then students will face difficulty in learning things, low-learners might feel secluded from the class and shows disinterest in those subjects, therefore, their grades can be seen decreasing. An act of maintaining eye contact with every student in the classroom establishes a bond of a good healthy relationship. Talking to every student and maintaining five to ten-seconds of eye contact whenever is possible will work as strength, encouragement and motivation for learning or developing skills among each student.

Proxemics refers to the study of space and distance influence communication (Schmitz 2016, p. 211). It is another important tool in the classroom for enhancing the teaching-learning of communication skills and maintaining classroom discipline. According to Edward T hall, there are four-zone of space: the public zone (12 or more feet from our body), social zone (4-12 feet from our body), the personal zone (1.5-4 feet from our body), and the intimate zone (from body contact to 1.5 feet away) (Proxemics 2020). In the classroom many teachers use elevated stage and podium for teaching, writing on the chalkboard and some teachers make use of the space in the classroom by teaching and walking. Proxemic distance maintained between teacher and student is 4-12 feet but sometimes the teacher had to invade the student's territory for controlling the act of misbehaving, for not being attentive or focused. Effective use of space in the classroom is pivotal because it let the teacher make students aware without hurting them verbally and by not making them embarrassed by taking their names in front of the whole class. Moving around the class, invading the territory of students help them to stay active, focused and build a good environment for learning and developing communication skills. Therefore, maintaining eye contact and

proxemics are considered to be the powerful message conveyed with or without words in the classroom to encourage students to foster learning.

A good teacher is like a ray of light in a learner's life that takes away all their darkness and enlightens them with knowledge. Using NVC in the English classroom will break barriers between students and teacher because using gestures-eye contact and proxemics helps teachers to share ideas and thoughts skillfully and effectively with the students without hurting them. It will help them to build a good relationship, gain confidence in learning new skills like sending and receiving messages not only through oral words but also nonverbally. Students and teachers will become culturally aware of NV cues, and make a difference in his/her life by understanding each other and becoming part of their community. This behaviour might encourage learners to develop communication skills and it will be fostering positive characteristics, manners, habits and more among students.

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